



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Sara L. Hensley

**SUBJECT:** ANIMAL LICENSE AMNESTY  
AND SHELTER AWARENESS

**DATE:** 08-13-04

Approved

Date

8/24/04

Council District: Citywide

SNI Area: N/A

## RECOMMENDATION

Approval of an ordinance authorizing an Amnesty Program from October 1, 2004 through November 15, 2004 suspending all animal licensing citation activity, waiving late fees, and delaying the FY 04-05 increase in fees for unaltered dogs and cats until the completion of the proposed amnesty program.

## BACKGROUND

For the past several decades, the Humane Society of Santa Clara County has provided animal shelter services for the City of San Jose at their facility in Santa Clara. However, effective October, 2004, this responsibility will be transferred to the City and a new state-of-the-art Animal Care Facility will be opened at 2750 S. Monterey Highway in San Jose.

In an effort to ensure a smooth transition, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Services (PRNS) is proposing that a comprehensive outreach effort take place to advise residents of the transfer in service and the location of the new shelter facility.

It is also recommended that a 45-day amnesty program suspending animal licensing fees and late charges coincide with the outreach campaign. In offering this incentive, the Department hopes to encourage residents to become familiar with the San Jose facility and increase voluntary compliance with the City's animal and rabies control regulations. The purpose of this memorandum is to outline the scope of the proposed outreach plan, to review the proposal for amnesty and seek authorization to delay the proposed FY04-05 increases in unaltered animal fees until the completion of the proposed amnesty program.

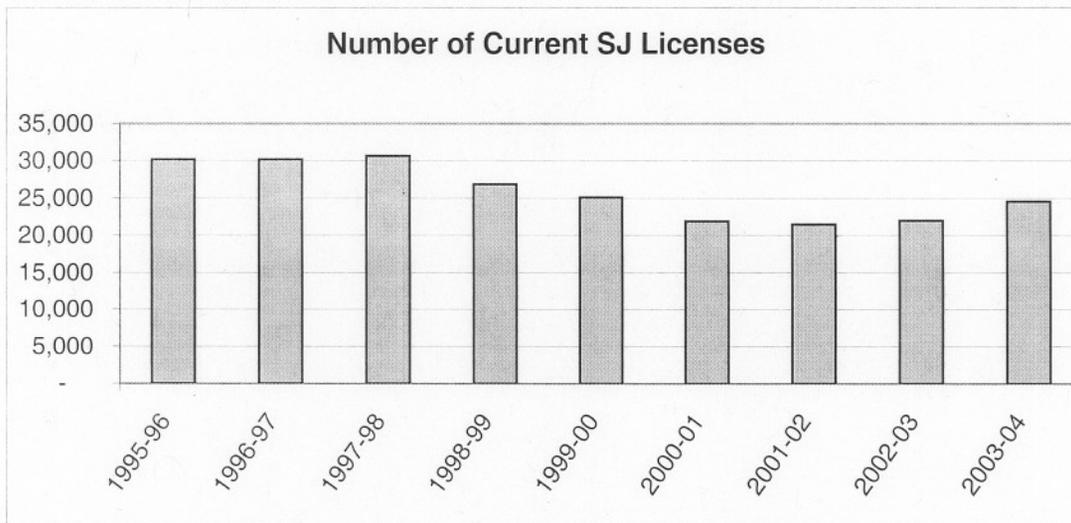
**ANALYSIS**

**Outreach Plan**

The new 50,000 square foot Animal Care Facility is scheduled to open to the public on October 1. A grand opening event is scheduled for September 25. To publicize this opening, the Department intends to distribute a direct mailer to 300,000 San Jose households, post information on the City’s website and publish announcements in local newspapers. In addition, the Department will issue public service announcements and include articles in Department’s communications with neighborhoods such as the electronic newsletter “Community Connections” distributed by the Neighborhood Development Center.

**Amnesty Program**

The City of San Jose requires that owners of adult dogs and cats vaccinate and license their pets. However, it is estimated that less than 10% of the total pet population in San Jose is properly licensed. The following chart illustrates the last 8 years of licensing activity. As you can see, licensing compliance has declined from FY97-98 and is just now starting to rebound.



Licensing laws ensure that rabies vaccinations are current, provide a mechanism for identification of stray animals and serve to offset some of the costs associated with the animal services program. Failure to vaccinate or license a dog or cat can result in administrative citations with fines ranging from \$100 to \$250 and/or a misdemeanor charge. Late charges can also be imposed adding to the cost of non-compliance. State law requires that the fee for a non-sterilized dog be at least double the fee charged for a sterilized dog. The higher fee for a non-sterilized dog is intended to encourage the spaying and neutering of dogs and assign animal control costs to pet owners who have chosen not to sterilize their animals.

The opening of the new Animal Care facility is a prime opportunity to initiate an aggressive licensing program to encourage compliance with licensing requirements. The Department proposes to suspend licensing fees and late charges for a period of 45 days (October 1, 2004 through November 15) as well as halt citation activity as an incentive for pet owners to voluntarily comply with licensing requirements. It is anticipated that this waiver of fees will increase the likelihood that pet owners will visit the new facility, learn about programs offered by the Animal Care and Services Division and provide an opportunity to promote the Division's animal adoption program. In addition, the Division intends to offer a variety of services such as low cost rabies vaccinations and animal behavior classes that will promote responsible pet ownership.

A final component of the recommended amnesty program is a proposal to delay the approved FY 04-05 increase in licensing fees for unaltered animals until the end of the amnesty period. This incentive would represent an additional cost savings for pet owners of \$18 for owners of unaltered dogs and \$6 dollars for unaltered cats.

Following the amnesty period, a second phase of the licensing program will be implemented. During this phase, ACS will undertake an extensive ongoing outreach campaign to contact and educate individual pet owners regarding San Jose animal vaccination and licensing requirements. Once contacted, pet owners with unvaccinated/unlicensed animals will be required to secure a license within 10 days. ACS has piloted the 10 day approach and has experienced almost 90% compliance rate. ACS has increased new licenses dramatically through the use of this technique and the most current data illustrate an increase of 60% in new licenses in FY 03-04 over FY 02-03. This technique allows the owner to achieve compliance and avoid the enforcement of a citation.

### **CONCLUSION**

The opening of the new Animal Shelter represents an exciting opportunity for the City to increase community awareness and promote responsible pet ownership. The Department would like to capitalize on this opportunity by providing incentives to pet owners to comply with licensing requirements. As such, the Department recommends a 45-day amnesty program to suspend licensing fees and late charges as well as a delay in the proposed increase of fees for unaltered dogs/cats until the completion of the proposed amnesty program.

### **COST IMPLICATIONS**

ACS estimates that an amnesty program will register an additional 2,000 licenses. The revenue associated with those first new licenses is approximately \$50,000 in the first year and would continue for several years with a slight decline as pet owners move or no longer own the pet. The cost of the direct mailer is expected to be approximately \$45,000. The Division expects to offset this cost through additional revenue generated as a result of the outreach and licensing campaign.

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### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The content of this memo was discussed and endorsed at the April 4, 2004 meeting of the Animal Advisory Committee, an 8-member group of community members.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, the City Manager's Budget Office and the City's Public Outreach and Outreach Manager.

### **CEQA**

Not a project.



SARA L. HENSLEY  
Director of Parks, Recreation  
and Neighborhood Services

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